



Sitting comfortably: but Mike Pearce prefers not to have a fixed office, so he can feel closer to the lively workplace



Mike Pearce

Furniture design specialist Herman Miller invites *Director* into its innovative international headquarters to explain the company's Living Office idea. The vice president for EMEA is our guide...

Interview **Behiye Hassan** Photographs **Gemma Day**

This building was purpose-built for us to move into in 2007 when our manufacturing was growing and we needed to create room. When we walked our staff through they could see that it was a far more energising place than the one we were working in previously.

Our Living Office concept is a set of management tools and solutions that we've put together to help our clients and customers produce workplaces that are more productive and creative. It's a result of decades of research that we have done into current and future trends as well as what's happening in the world of work and the drivers that are changing it, such as technology and work/life balance.

The building [in Chippenham, Wiltshire] is called the Village Green – it's a place where people congregate. In our previous building I had an office and the door was always open but it was still difficult to connect with people. I'd ask them to come in

as they walked past, so they could tell me what was going on. But when we moved here, I said, absolutely, that I didn't want an office. Just give me a desk for my laptop and phone and a coffee table with two seats so I can hold conversations with people. If the

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building has meeting rooms, areas where I can make calls, places where I can talk one to one, I don't need to have a fixed office.

As a result, none of the leadership team, except the HR director, has an office, and it's worked very well. From day one I felt much better connected with people, the team and

the business. This is what the Living Office is all about; choice and allowing employees to go wherever they need to in a building to conduct various parts of their work.

I love the vibrancy of Herman Miller. When visitors come here – whether they're students, architects or customers – that vibe is great because everyone feels energised by it. The building offers a fantastic opportunity for our employees to connect with customers. There's a café right next to the reception so immediately, when people walk in here, they connect with our employees – that's really important.

The next focus is on different markets as we are managing to secure hospital projects in the Middle East, and that's been a very good part of our business. It would be great to be seen as a brand that creates productive spaces rather than a company that happens to make furniture.

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